

## Practical information

Caithness offers a spectacular coastline studded with vertiginous fishing villages, harbours for herring and flagstone exports, impressively large corn mills and improvement steadings, an interesting vernacular architecture of huge sandstone slates over layers of similar horizontally-laid stone walls, a material particularly good for making pavements. The towns Wick and Thurso are the largest north of Inverness with banks (at the time of writing), shops etc. A day trip to Orkney offers a chance to see the fascinating remains of the Royal Naval base Scapa Flow, more rich landscapes and picturesque coastal towns. A simple tourist map of the North Highlands, and information on engineering heritage from ICE:

<https://dounreay.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CASVAG-leaflet-2016.pdf>

<https://www.northcoast500.com/blog/blog/january-2018/nc500-civil-engineering-past-and-present.aspx>

It will be for delegates to book accommodation of their choice. To this end a fixed number of bedrooms at the two larger hotels -the Norseman and MacKays- are being held until April. When booking please mention IA conference to obtain a small discount:

Norseman Hotel [info@norsemanhotelwick.co.uk](mailto:info@norsemanhotelwick.co.uk) tel 01955 603344

Mackay's Hotel [info@mackayshotel.co.uk](mailto:info@mackayshotel.co.uk) tel 01955 602323

Queen's Hotel, [petersutherland@btconnect.com](mailto:petersutherland@btconnect.com) tel 01955 602992

Netherby Guest House, <http://netherbyhousewick.co.uk/> tel 01955 603443

Seaview Guest House [seaviewguesthouse14@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:seaviewguesthouse14@yahoo.co.uk) tel 01955 602735

Bank Guest House [info@guesthousewick.co.uk](mailto:info@guesthousewick.co.uk) tel 01955 604001

Wick Caravan & Camping Site, <http://www.wickcaravansite.co.uk/> Tel: 01955 605420

<https://www.visitscotland.com/info/towns-villages/wick-p236221>

Summary timetable:

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu 21 June	Fri 22 June	Sat 23 June	Sun 24 June
			Gather in Inverness	Inverness-Brora/Wick	Wick	Orkney
Mon 25 June	Tue 26 June	Wed 27 June	Thu 28 June	Fri 29 June	Sat 30 June	Sun 1 July
Wick- NE Thurso Dunnet Castletown	Wick-SW Central Caithness/ Dunbeath	Wick- Golspie- Inverness		ICE PHEW	ICE PHEW	ICE PHEW

For updates see HES Engine Shed <https://www.engineshed.org/whats-on/> or

<https://www.engineshed.scot/whats-on/event/?eventId=0c6bbe05-98c1-4042-83c3-a886009e52be>

### Suggested O.S. Maps

Explorer Series 450 (Fri, Tue, Wed), 451 (Mon), 461 & 463 (Sun). Or

Landranger series 6 or 7 for Orkney, 11 or 12 for Caithness, with much overlap.

Book on line via the booking form by BACS payment or cheque made payable to Scottish

Vernacular Buildings Working Group (Scottish Charity SC 010835), sent to

SVBWG, D Kidd, 51 Drylaw Crescent, Edinburgh, EH4 2AS

Bank of Scotland Acc No: 00633200; Sort Code: 80-11-00

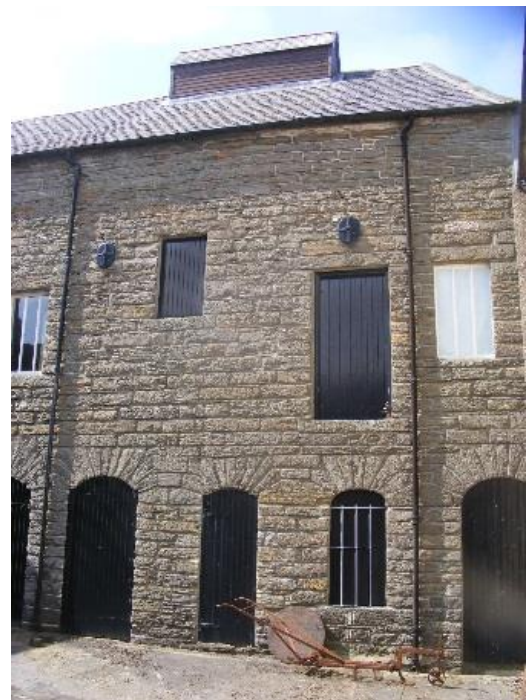
Or <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/industrial-archaeology-2018-conference-tickets-42531402570>



Friday 22 June 09.30 to 17.00

**Tour A: Inverness to Wick day tour**

If you plan to break your journey overnight in Inverness, or take the Sleeper rail service, this coach is for you. We leave Inverness at 9.30 via industrial heritage sites in Easter Ross and Eastern Sutherland. We pause at Thomas Telford's Mound sluice gates combine a road bridge and land reclamation scheme (below left) and Brora (whisky, coal-mining, salt-making). The working Clynelish Distillery is beside the soon to be reactivated Brora distillery (right, dormant since 1983). Then we greet Caithness at Berriedale (a Telford-designed Church). Oil rigs are certain to be seen, moored in Cromarty Firth and the only ones visible from land that are actually drilling in the North Sea.



**Saturday 23rd June**

**B Morning Conference** in Wick Baptist Church, Pulteneytown, laid out by Thomas Telford for the British Fisheries Society. Lectures include Geoffrey Stell, 'Defending Scapa Flow, 1939-45: the Caithness contribution'. Afternoon tours will take in visits to Pulteney Distillery, the Johnston Photo collection in a Carnegie Library, and Wick Heritage Society's premises in a cooperage with a kipper kiln (right). Close to MacKay's and Queen's Hotels.

**Sunday 24th June 7 am to 20.30 pm**

**Tours C, D or E Full day in Orkney:**

7.00 depart from Wick for a clockwise spin across Orkney.  
8.45 Ferry leaves Scrabster. Optional breakfast on-board.  
10.15 arrive in picturesque Stromness, Orkney.

**Tour C Mainland Orkney tour** from Stromness to HMSA Tern (Twatt Airfield) or Click Mill, Dounby (200m walk over rough and boggy ground, whilst Twatt has tarmac. Choose on the day as bus will make drops at both). Barony or Boardhouse Mill in Birsay grinds beremeal grown on the island, a great delicacy, left) (groups of 12 take turns). Packed lunch.



Then to Kirkwall Power Station (16MW diesel 1953, with a 2MW lithium battery) and the Churchill Barriers, built by Balfour Beatty and POW labour, and the Italian chapel made from two Nissen huts. The barriers



are now an essential part of the road network. On to St Margaret's Hope, a small town with similar piers to those at Stromness and Lerwick's lodberries. Comfort break then:

19.00 ferry from Burwick to John O' Groats passes Pentland Skerries lighthouses and abandoned Stroma.

20.30 (approx) Back in Wick: pubs & restaurants available (nothing booked). Sandwiches in Orkney for lunch and evening sustenance as the timings of ferries do not suit sit-down meals. Other options:



**D. Stromness on foot.** Explore the most charming town in the northern isles (left), with numerous private landing piers, a stone flagged main street, museum (admission charge included) and Pier Arts Centre. Walk to the WWII Ness Battery (tour arranged). Return on the 16.45 sailing to Scrabster (18.15) and get back sooner to Thurso and Wick. No lunch provided.

**E. Stay on Orkney Isles.** Book own accommodation in Kirkwall, the next day visit Highland Park or Scapa Distilleries or take ferries to other islands from Kirkwall. Price will be one-way with us only. AIA leaves you at Kirkwall or St Margaret's Hope (X1 bus returns to Kirkwall at 18.15)

**F. Sleep in,** spend day in Caithness without crossing to Orkney. Coastal walks or the public bus to Thurso?

### Monday 25th June 9 am to 18.15 pm

#### Tour G: Dunnet, northernmost tip

Subsea 7 combines cables into pipes for the north sea oil industry on a 7km railway that are then launched into the sea; then round the coast via Keiss, John 'O Groats (shopping/ comfort break) and John 'O Groats Mill (right) where there are hopes it will be conserved and made accessible to the public. Dunnet Head lighthouse and cold war defences form the northern most point of the British main land. We conclude at Mary Ann's Cottage (croft museum scarcely altered since before the war or Rock Rose Gin Distillery (choose on the day). Afternoon tea at Castletown harbour, built for shipment of the pavement slabs that were quarried here on the north coast, then a brief look at Thurso.



#### Tour H: Nuclear Fission, Thurso and north Sutherland



Nucleus, the Nuclear and Caithness Archives will put out choice exhibits in a new purpose-built facility to cover the nuclear industry as well as local studies. Heading to the north coast we pass Dounreay (viewpoints roadside and from Sandside harbour, left). We turn at Melvich, just within mountainous Sutherland, then head to Thurso and Caithness Horizons, where the Dounreay control room is now displayed. Some time for shopping or exploring in a tour on foot, Thurso, largest town in the North Highlands. Castletown Quarries and harbour as above.

### Tuesday 26 June 9.00- 17.30

#### Tour I: Central Caithness Stone Industries

We take the coastal road to Latheron and Laidhay Croft Museum, which is thatched and has a portable iron horsemill, then cross the empty Flow Country to visit working stone quarries at Spittal. Here sandstone pavement slabs and monuments are sawn or cut (right) with the help of CAD. Note: uneven surfaces, and be aware of working machinery. We will pause in the grid-plan "improvement" town of Halkirk and in Watten, birthplace of Alexander Bain, inventor of the fax.



### Tour J: Dunbeath, East coast fisheries

Northlands Glass Centre creates artistic glass in a former school, the successor to Caithness Glass. Lybster harbour (right) has the Waterlines visitor centre in a fish smoking kiln and warehouse, then it's onto Dunbeath harbour, visitor centre and bridges. Back via the recently restored, long -closed Thrumster Station (on a line connecting Lybster to Wick), winner of a 2017 Railway Heritage Award.



#### Option J RIB:

The precipitous Whaligoe Steps (left), accessing a natural harbour set into cliffs, will be viewed from an RIB boat provided by Caithness Seacoast, tides permitting. It will deposit group RIB1 at Lybster harbour and pick up RIB2 for return leg. RIB1 omits Northlands Glass but continues by coach to Dunbeath. RIB2 lunches in Wick, visits Wick Lifeboat House and Stevenson's damaged breakwater in Wick, and Old Wick instead of Dunbeath, or will allow for noon departure from Wick if required. The allocation will be made the previous day. If weather does not permit a daytime trip those who have paid for this will be offered an evening cruise instead. See conditions/ FAQ at <http://www.caithness-seacoast.co.uk/>

**Wednesday 27th June 10.00 am to 15.00/ 17.01 pm**

### Tour K: Wick to Inverness via Helmsdale

10.00 from Wick Norseman via MacKay's Hotel to Inverness, making different stops en route to those made northwards, Helmsdale (Telford's bridge, right, unusually has two arches- he preferred odd numbers for aesthetics, an Ice House and Timespan visitor centre comfort break), lunch in Golspie, and a distillery (such as Balblair, Glenmorangie, or Dalmore. Depending on numbers, we may split the group or offer alternatives).

Arrive Inverness around 3pm. Connections to Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh via Perth by rail, or evening flights.



### Tour L: Wick to Inverness via Dunrobin Castle estate, Golspie



Pausing at Helmsdale as above, and then getting out at Golspie, estate village for the Duke of Sutherland, we spend 2.5 hours at Dunrobin Castle and Estate, noting the extensive improvement funded by Staffordshire coalmines, but still the Duke is locally reviled for the clearances. Charles Barry gave the castle its distinctive French chateau profile.

We will pre-book the group onto the 14.42 train from the Duke of Sutherland's private station (left) to arrive in Inverness at 17.01, looping around Attadale and Beaully.

What next? The **ICE Panel for Historical Engineering Works (PHEW)** will hold its celebrated annual tour from Beaully near Inverness, 29 June- 1 July 2018. Contact [spurves004@btinternet.com](mailto:spurves004@btinternet.com) for details.